



WUJ-2004  
**Wilder Ridge Shaded Fuel Break**  
 Between the communities of Whitethorn and Honeydew, Humboldt County, California  
 15 miles (270 acres) total along the Eitersburg / Wilder Ridge Road

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Grant for the “Telegraph & Wilder Ridge Shaded Fuelbreak” project.

## Treatment of Structure Ignitability

The Humboldt-Del Norte Unit contains many communities that are threatened with potential loss of life and property due to wildfires. These and many other communities in California are subject to threats from wildfire, yet thousands of homes continue to be constructed every year that are not safe for fire prone areas.

Due to major wildfires that have occurred in California, various statues and regulations have been enacted to combat the ever-increasing threats to lives and property due to wildfire. Laws have been enacted to govern fire safety in regards to vegetation management, land use and more. However, aside from fire retardant roofing requirements, little had been accomplished at the state in regards to adoption of “Fire Safe” building standards for homes and other structures.

With passing of Assembly Bill 1216 in January 2005, the California State Fire Marshall (SFM) was given statutory authority to expand fire safety building standards in areas with high fire risk to include components such as: roofs, exterior walls, attic eave vents, windows and structure projections including porches, decks, balconies, and eaves.  
 (see PRC 4291 & Gov. Code 51189 on page 49 that apply to this law)

This law will reduce the spread of fire to and from structures and will save lives,

minimize property loss, and protect the environment.

# Make Your Home FIRE SAFE



**100' DEFENSIBLE SPACE**

Contact your local CDF office, fire department, or Fire Safe Council for tips and assistance.  
[www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)



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## A Quick Checklist

Following these simple steps can dramatically increase the chance of your home surviving a wildfire!

- ☐ Create a **DEFENSIBLE SPACE** of 100' around your home. The area closest to your home is the most important.
- ☐ Try to get 10 to 15 feet of spacing, both vertically and horizontally between shrubs, large plants, and trees. If you have 4 foot high brush underneath larger trees with limbs, limb up the tree at least 14 feet. This eliminates the "fuel ladder" to the tops of trees. Breaks like this in the vegetation help to slow down an advancing fire and gives firefighters a fighting chance.
- ☐ Plan your landscape to eliminate a continuous path of vegetation. Do not have any combustible fuel within three feet of your home.
- ☐ For landscaping purposes, use of irrigated fire resistant plants is encouraged. Green lawn, rock, stone, and other materials can be used to create an attractive and fire safe landscape.
- ☐ Clear all vegetation and other flammable materials from beneath your deck. Enclose undersides of elevated decks with fire resistant building materials, or with screen mesh with openings no greater than 1/4 inch.
- ☐ Keep trees trimmed at least 10' from your chimney and trim all dead limbs hanging over your house or garage.
- ☐ Clean all needles and leaves from the roof, eaves, and rain gutters.
- ☐ Maintain your landscaping with regular watering and weeding to keep it fire safe.

*More than 1,700 structures are destroyed by wildfire each year just within CDF's jurisdiction. Don't become a statistic...*

**Be Fire Safe, California!**

May 2005

#### **Public Resources Code 4291**

(g) Prior to constructing a new building or structure or rebuilding a building or structure damaged by a fire in such an area, the construction or rebuilding of which requires a building permit, the owner shall obtain a certification from the local building official that the dwelling or structure, as proposed to be built, complies with all applicable state and local building standards, including those described in subdivision (b) of Section 51189 of the Government **Code**, and shall provide a copy of the certification, upon request, to the insurer providing course of construction insurance coverage for the building or structure. Upon completion of the construction or rebuilding, the owner shall obtain from the local building official, a copy of the final inspection report that demonstrates that the dwelling or structure was constructed in compliance with all applicable state and local building standards, including those described in subdivision (b) of Section 51189 of the Government **Code**, and shall provide a copy of the report, upon request, to the property insurance carrier that insures the dwelling or structure.

#### **Government Code 51189**

(a) The Legislature finds and declares that space and structure defensibility is essential to effective fire prevention. This defensibility extends beyond the vegetation management practice required by this chapter, and includes, but is not limited to, measures that increase the likelihood of a structure to withstand intrusion by fire, such as building design and construction requirements that use fire resistant building materials, and provide protection of structure projections, including, but not limited to, porches, decks, balconies and eaves, and structure openings, including, but not limited to, attic and eave vents and windows.

(b) No later than January 1, 2005, the State Fire Marshal, in consultation with the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection and the Director of Housing and Community Development, shall, pursuant to Section 18930 of the Health and Safety Code, recommend building standards that provide for comprehensive space and structure defensibility to protect structures from fires spreading from adjacent structures or vegetation and vegetation from fires spreading from adjacent structures.



**Cooks Valley area  
Humboldt / Mendocino  
County line on the Hwy 101 corridor.**

Information drawn from a variety of sources is included in the following pages to help educate the public as to what they can do to help mitigate potential problems associated with living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

# What is Pre-Fire Management?

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

**Since 1923, more than 15,000 homes and other structures have been damaged or destroyed by wildfires in California.** By placing the emphasis on what needs to be done long before a fire starts, Pre-Fire Management actions can reduce property losses, fire fighting costs, increase firefighter safety, and contribute to ecosystem health.

Pre-fire activities such as clearing a *defensible space*, putting in and maintaining *fire safe landscaping*, utilizing *prescribed fire*, creating *fuel breaks*, and practicing *forest management* are proven methods of reducing wildfire destruction.

**In 2003, over 3,700 homes were destroyed by wildfires in Southern California alone.** Pre-Fire Management is a term all Californian's living in a wildland setting need to know.



*While the fire burned all around, defensible space, gave firefighters the chance to save this home.*

### Defensible Space

When you remove flammable vegetation and create a fire safe landscape of at least 100 feet, you create a "defensible space" - an area that will help protect your home and provide a safety zone for the firefighters who are battling the flames.

This defensible space around your home and other structures will not only provide you with the greatest chance for survival, it is also required by California law (PRC 4291). Check with your local fire department for defensible space requirements in your area.

### Fire Safe Landscaping

Defensible space does not mean bare dirt. Fire safe landscaping around your home and other structures means:

- Using fire resistant plants with native species and green lawn;
- Spacing trees and shrubs at least 10 feet apart;
- Removing lower tree branches within six feet of the ground; and
- Maintaining your landscaping with regular watering and weeding.





## **Prescribed Fires/Vegetation Management Program (VMP)**

The use of "prescribed" or intentionally set fire under controlled circumstances, can remove unhealthy and dangerously overgrown vegetation before a wildfire strikes. Prescribed fire projects reduce the risk of large damaging wildfires while improving the growing conditions of native plants and wildlife.

The CDF Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is a cost-sharing program with landowners that focuses on the use of prescribed fire, and mechanical means, for addressing wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands.



*A VMP burn removes the dense underbrush without killing the trees.*

## **Fuel Breaks**

Fuel breaks are wide strips of land on which trees and vegetation have been significantly, and in some cases permanently, reduced or removed. They may also be large greenbelt areas built into communities. These areas can slow, and even stop, the spread of a wildland fire because they provide fewer fuels to carry the flames. They also provide firefighters with safe zones to take a stand against a wildfire, or retreat from flames if the need arises.



*The varying pattern, and vegetation left throughout this fuel break, serves to blend better with the environment and maintains wildlife habitat.*

## **Forest Management**

Unthinned, unmanaged, densely-packed forested and vegetated areas provide ample fuel for flames to spread. Well-managed forests and wildland areas reduce fire hazard, improve forest health, wildlife habitat, and watershed resources.

*This is an unthinned forest. The trees are densely packed. If flames get into this area they will easily spread from tree to tree.*



*This is that same area of forest after a wildfire burned through. Note the trees in the stand that have been completely scorched. If this forest had been managed through selective thinning many more trees would be left with their foliage.*

**January 1, 2005**



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[www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)

### Fire is a Fact of Life

California is home to some of the most scenic views in the world. The natural beauty and mild, Mediterranean climate have attracted millions to settle in the foothills, deserts and coastal valleys.

But living in California means learning to live with fire. That's become our scenic view's one independence. Fire creates seed catalogs, allowing our native plants to thrive. And it clears out dead brush that can choke living plants and cut off food for wildlife.

So why are today's fires so devastating, destroying our neighborhoods, taking our homes, possessions and even lives?

The answer lies in our own backyard.

### Your Best Defense Against Fire

Firefighters agree: It's not if, but when, fire will burn through an area. And there aren't enough firefighters to protect every home. Firefighters need your help to give your home a fighting chance.

The single most important factor that will help your home stand alone against fire and give firefighters a base to battle the flames is A FIRE SAFE LANDSCAPE.

### What is a Fire Safe landscape?

A fire safe landscape uses fire resistant plants that are strategically placed to resist the spread of fire to your home.

The good news is, you don't need a lot of money to make your landscape fire safe. And you will find that a fire safe landscape can increase your property value and conserve water while beautifying your home.

The California Fire Safe Council is a broad-based partnership involving Californians through education and action programs because we believe fire prevention and loss reduction are everyone's business.

Contact your local Fire Safe Council for more information about fire safe landscaping and other steps you can take to increase your home's chance of surviving a wildfire.



California Fire Safe Council  
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510/733-7228  
[www.firecouncil.org](http://www.firecouncil.org)

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FIRE SAFE  
LANDSCAPING

How to Protect  
Your Home Against  
Wildfire Destruction

### Defensible Space

Define the space in the house around your house that will give firefighters a fighting chance against fire. It means clearing all dry grass, brush and dead leaves of least 20 to 100 feet from your house.

The key here is "at least." Your local fire department may ask for greater clearance. Consult them for requirements in your area.

Define the space and a fire safe landscape don't mean a strip of bare dirt around your house. When establishing your landscape, keep trees further from your house, shrubs can be closer, and spreading plants and lawns are around the house.

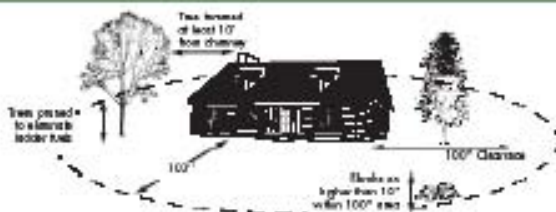
Your house may be the biggest investment you ever make. Protect that investment by following the steps in this brochure to create a fire safe landscape.

### Planning

- Assess your fire risk. Is your home on a hill? Are you near highly flammable olive vegetation or drought-damaged ornamental plants? If your answer is yes, your fire risk is greater than average.
- Consult your local fire department for fire hazard ratings in your neighborhood.
- Plan your landscape to reduce the amount of flammable vegetation around your house. Establish defensible space.
- Consider consulting your local nursery or a landscape contractor to help plan your landscape.

### Species

- Eliminate the "fire ladder." Fire starts fast in trees. You can stop its climb by cutting it off. Use fire-resistant species of vegetation that are away from your landscape to your house.
- Group plants of similar height and water requirements to create a "landscape mosaic" that can slow the spread of fire and use water most efficiently.
- Space trees at least 10 feet apart, and keep branches trimmed at least 10 feet from your roof. For trees taller than 10 feet, prune lower branches within six feet of the ground.



- Install fire resistant, drought-tolerant plants that have a high moisture content. Use plants that do not accumulate dead leaves or twigs.
- Use masonry or stone walls to separate plant groups and add variety to your landscape.

### Watering

- Choose the right irrigation system. While all plants will eventually turn, healthy plants turn less quickly. Your plant selection and water availability will determine the right system for you.
- Consider drip irrigation for watering most of your landscape. It's effective and conserves water because it targets where the water goes and how much gets there.
- Use sprinklers for lawns or for landscaping. Drip irrigation does not work well on lawns. Sprinklers on lawns ensure your lawn is getting the right amount of water to keep it healthy and fire resistant.

### Maintenance

- Keep your landscape healthy and dense. On a regular basis, remove dead branches, leaves and pine needles from your yard. These can serve as ladder fuel to a fire.
- Prune and thin shrubs, trees and other plants to minimize the fuel load.

- Be diligent about cleaning up, especially during fire season. Remove dead vegetation close to plants as well.
- Involve your gardener. If a gardener comes for your property, ask him or her to include these regular maintenance steps as part of the regular service.
- Recycle your post-plant materials. Participate in your community's green waste recycling program. You can also compost plant litter and create a money-saving alternative to store bought soil and mulch. Composting is another time and money-saving way to make your green waste work for you.

### California Fire Safe Council

The California Fire Safe Council's mission is to preserve and enhance California's nonwooded and wooded resources by providing leadership and support that mobilizes all Californians to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfire.

The California Fire Safe Council has more than 10 years of leadership in bringing together private individuals, local organizations, industry groups, government agencies and others for effective prevention action against wildfire.